

“THE ARK OF HIS COVENANT”

NO. 2427

A SERMON

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, AUGUST 25, 1895

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON

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*“And the temple of God was opened in heaven,
and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament [covenant—R.V.]:
and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”
Revelation 11:19*

I SHALL take the passage quite by itself. I do not fully understand its connection, whether it relates to that which goes before or to that which comes afterwards, and happily, it is not necessary for us to know this, for the passage stands complete in itself and is full of valuable instruction.

Dear friends, even we who believe have as yet failed to see much of the truth of God. We know enough to save us, to comfort us, and to help us on our way to heaven, but oh, how much of the glory of divine truth has never yet been revealed to our eyes! Some of God’s children do not fully know even the common truths as yet, and those who do not know them realize but little of their depth and height.

From our text it appears that there are certain things of God which as yet we have not seen—there is need that they should be opened up to us—“The temple of God was opened in heaven.” When our Lord Jesus died, He split the veil of the temple and so He laid open the holy of holies. But such is our dimness of sight that we need to have the temple opened, and we need to have the holy of holies opened, so that we may see what is not really concealed, but what we are not ready to perceive by reason of the slowness of our understandings.

The two words for “temple” here may relate not only to the temple itself, but also to the holy of holies, the innermost shrine. Both of these, it seems, need to be opened, or else we shall not see what is in them. Blessed be the Holy Spirit that He opens up one truth after another to us. Our Savior’s promise to His disciples was, “When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.”

If we were more teachable, if we were more anxious to be taught, and waited upon Him more, He would, doubtless, lead us into many a truth which at the present moment we have not fully enjoyed. It is a happy thing for you and for me when at any time we can say, “The temple of God was opened in heaven so that we saw even that which was in the innermost shrine of the holy temple.”

The saints in heaven doubtless behold all the glory of God so far as it can be perceived by created beings, but we who are on the right way thither behold, as in a glass darkly, the glory of the Lord. We know only in part, but the part we do know is not as great as it might be—we might know far more than we do even here.

Some suppose that they can know but little, because they say, it is written, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” Yes, but why do you stop there? Half a text is often not true—go on to the end of the passage—“But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God.”

And that which your eye cannot see, and your ear cannot hear, and the heart of man cannot imagine, can be revealed to you by the Spirit of the Lord. Oh, that we were more conscious of the power of the Spirit and that we waited upon Him for yet fuller instruction! Then I am persuaded that, in our measure

and degree, it would be true to us, even as to the perfected ones above, “The temple of God was opened in heaven,” and they saw that which was in the holiest place.

What did they see when the temple was opened? When the secret place was laid bare to them, what did they see? That is to be my subject. “There was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant.” If we could look into heaven at this moment, this is what we should see, “the ark of his covenant.” O sinner, you think that you would see an angry God, but you would see the ark of His covenant!

O child of God, perhaps you dream of many things that might distress you in the glory of that sight, but rest you content, this would be the main sight that you would see—Jesus, the incarnate God, the great covenant Surety! You would see there, where the Godhead shines resplendent, the ark of His covenant.

I. I shall begin by noticing, first, that THE ARK OF HIS COVENANT IS ALWAYS NEAR TO GOD—“There was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant.”

Of course, the outward symbol is gone—we are not now speaking of a temple made with hands, that is to say, of this building. We speak of the spiritual temple above. We speak of the spiritual holy of holies. If we could look in there, we would see the ark of the covenant, and we would see the covenant itself always near to God. The covenant is always there. God never forgets it—it is ever before Him—“There was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant.”

Why is this? Is it not because the covenant is always standing? The Lord said concerning His people of old, “I will make with them an everlasting covenant,” of which David said, “Yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” If God has made a covenant with you, it is not simply for today and tomorrow, nor merely for this life, but for the ages of ages, even forever and ever.

If He has struck hands with you through the great Surety, and He has pledged Himself to you, remember, “If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.” JEHOVAH has said, “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed.”

What He has said He will stand to forever. He will keep His Word. He said to His Son, “I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people.” And He will never revoke the gift. This covenant stands secure. Though earth’s old columns bow, and though my spirits sink, and flesh and heart fail me, yet this covenant shall bear me up even to the end.

The covenant of grace is forever the same, because first, *the God who made it changes not*. There can be no change in God. The supposition is inconsistent with a belief in His deity. Hear what He says—“I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” The sun has his changes, but the Father of lights is without variableness, or shadow of turning. “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”

God has never to alter His purposes—why should He? Those purposes are always infinitely wise. He knows the end from the beginning, so His covenant, which He made with such deliberation in the councils of eternity, that covenant which is sealed with the most precious things He ever had, even with the blood of His only-begotten Son, that covenant upon which He stakes His eternal honor, for His glory and honor are wrapped up with the covenant of grace—that covenant cannot be changed because God Himself changes not.

Then, next, *the Christ who is its Surety and Substance changes not*. Christ, the great sacrifice by whose death the covenant was ratified, Christ, the Surety, who has sworn to carry out our part of the covenant, Christ, who is the very Sum and Substance of the covenant, never alters. “All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”

If we had a variable Savior, brethren, we should have a changeable covenant. Look at Adam—he could change and therefore he was a poor representative of the human race. Our first federal head soon

fell because he was a mere man. But the Surety of the new covenant is the Son of God, who, like His Father, fails not, and changes not.

Though He is of the substance of His mother, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and therefore can stand as man's Representative, yet is He Light of Light, very God of very God, and so He stands fast and firm, like the unchanging God Himself. In this great truth we do and we will rejoice. The covenant is always before God, for Christ is always there. He, the Lamb in the midst of the throne, makes the covenant always to be close to the heart of God.

And beloved, note you this. The covenant must always be near to God because *the love which suggested it changes not*. The Lord loves His people with a love which has no beginning, no end, no boundary, no change. He says, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”

When the love of God's heart goes forth toward the believer, it is not changeful like the love of man—sometimes high and sometimes low, sometimes strong and sometimes weak. But as it is said of our Savior, “having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end,” so can it be said of the great Father, that His love is evermore the same. And if the love which dictated the covenant is always in the heart of God, depend upon it that the covenant which comes of that love is always there in the secret place of the Most High.

Reflect also, beloved brethren, that *the promises contained in the covenant change not*. I quoted to you, just now, one passage about the promises, and that is enough—“All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him, Amen.” Not one single promise of God shall ever fall to the ground unfulfilled. His word in the form of promises, as well as in the form of the Gospel, shall not return unto Him void.

O souls, you may hang your whole weight upon any promise of God! You need not fear that it will break. Though all the vessels of the King's house were hung on one nail made by Him, that nail would bear them all up, as well as the flagons as the vessels of smaller measure. Heaven and earth may hang upon a single promise of God. The voice that rolls the stars along and keeps them all in their orbits is that voice which spoke even the least of the promises, and therefore every promise of God stands secure forever.

And once more, not only the promises, but *the force and binding power of the covenant change not*. All God's acts are done with a reference to His covenant and all His covenant has a reference to His covenanted ones. Remember what Moses said of old, “When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.”

Everything that He does follows the line and rule of His covenant. If He chastens and afflicts, it is not in anger, but in His dear covenant love. When first that covenant came into full action with the redeemed, it was all powerful, but it is just as powerful still. All that God does is still guided and directed by His eternal purpose and His covenant pledges to His people.

Stand still, then, and when you look up, if you cannot see that temple because your eye of faith is dim—if you scarcely dare to look within the secret place which is the holiest of all—yet know you of a surety that the covenant is still there, and always there, whether you see it or see it not.

I will tell you when, perhaps, you will best know that the covenant is there—that is, when the storm-clouds gather the most thickly. When you see the black masses come rolling up, then remember that the Lord said to Noah, “I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.”

Then shall you know that JEHOVAH remembers His covenant. You may even be half glad of a black cloud, that the sun of the divine love may paint upon it the many-colored bow, that God may look on it and remember His covenant. It is good for you to look on it, but what must it be for Him to look on it, and to remember His covenant?

Be thou glad that the covenant is always near to God, as our text declares, “And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant.”

II. Now, secondly, the covenant is seen of saints, “There was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant.”

First, we see it when, by faith, *we believe in Jesus as our Covenant Head*. By faith we know that God has entered into covenant with us. He that believes in Christ Jesus is in covenant with God. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” “He that believeth on him is not condemned.” He that believes in Him is at peace with God—he has passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation. You are in covenant with God, believer. Wipe your weeping eyes, ask God to take the dust out of them that you may see that there is an unchanging covenant made with you tonight and forever.

Next, we see this covenant when, by faith, *we perceive it in God’s actions toward us*. Faith may see the covenant of God in all His actions. Do you not remember how the old Scotch woman blessed God for her porridge, but she blessed Him most of all because the porridge was in the covenant? God had promised bread and water, and therefore it was sure to come to her. God sent her bread to her in the form of porridge and she blessed the Lord that it was in the covenant.

Now, I thank God that food is in the covenant, and that raiment is in the covenant. It is written, “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass,” so they are in the covenant. Life is in the covenant and death is in the covenant, “To die is gain.” Everything that is to happen to us is in the covenant. And when faith sees it so, it makes life a happy one.

Am I chastened? I say to myself “Well, the rod was in the covenant, for the Lord said that if His children disobeyed Him, He would chasten them with the rod of men. If I never had the rod, I would be afraid I was not in the covenant.” Is it not written, “In the world ye shall have tribulation?” That is a part of the covenant, you see, so that when you get it, say to yourself, “The God who is evidently keeping this part of His covenant will keep the rest of it to me, His child.”

Brethren, we get, perhaps, the best sight of the covenant when, *by prayer we plead it*. In that hour of our wrestling, in the time of our inward craving of mercies from the hand of God, we come at last to this, “Lord, You have promised. Do as You have said.” I love to put my finger on a promise and then to plead it with the Lord, saying, “This is Your word, my Father, and I know that You will not run back from it. O God, I believe in the inspiration of this Book and I take every word of it as coming from Your lips. Will You not seal it to my conscience, my heart, my experience, by proving it to be true?”

Have you ever found the Lord’s promises fail you? I remember one who had put in the margin of her Bible in several places, “T and P”—and when she was asked what those letters meant, she said, “They mean, ‘Tried and Proved.’” As I go through life, I keep trying and proving the promises of God, and then I put a mark in the margin of my Bible against every one I have tested, that I may not forget it the next time I have to plead it.” That is the way to see the covenant at the right hand of God, when you plead it in prayer.

And there are some of us, I think, who can say that *our experience up till now* proves that God does not forget His covenant. We have wandered, but we have been able to say, “He restoreth my soul,” for He has restored us. We have needed many things and we have gone to Him in prayer and pleaded that word, “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly,” and He has listened to the cries of His servants.

He said He would do so, “Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” He has remembered us in our low estate, for His mercy endures forever, and some of us who are no longer young can set to our seal that God is true because of many experiences of His faithfulness.

If they tell us that there is nothing in the Bible, and nothing in God, and nothing in the Gospel of Christ, we laugh them to scorn. We have now for many a year lived upon the faithfulness of God, and we cannot be driven into a distrust of Him. He is faithful and His mercy endures forever.

Do you not also think that, *when we arrive in heaven, we shall have a wonderful retrospect*, and that retrospect will all come to this, “The temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant”?

Miss Hannah Moore very prettily puts it that, often, we do not see the right side of things here. She went into a carpet manufactory and she looked at what the workmen were doing—and she could see nothing that looked like beauty of design. There were tags and ends hanging out and she said to the men, “I cannot perceive any design here,” and they answered, “No, Madam, for you are on the wrong side of the carpet.” But when she went round to the other side, she saw the beauty of the workmanship.

Alas! we are at present on the wrong side of God’s work—we must get to heaven to see it perfectly, and when we get there, we shall—

*“Sing, with wonder and surprise,
His lovingkindness in the skies.”*

and we shall say, “It was all right. It could not have been better.”—

*“Every dark and bending line
Meets in the center of His love.”*

God has not erred. He has not gone about the longest way to do His work, but He has done it in the wisest and most prudent manner all that was for the best and highest interests of His dear covenanted ones.

Thus I have shown you that sometimes, and it should be always, God’s people do see that glorious covenant of grace which is in the temple above.

III. Now I want to have your attention while I say briefly, in the third place, that THE COVENANT CONTAINS MUCH THAT IS WORTH SEEING.

Let us think of what was in the ancient ark of the covenant, for all that was in that ark as a *type* is to be seen in Christ, our heavenly covenant ark above.

In that ark, if you and I could have gone into the holy place, and have had our eyes strengthened to look, we would have seen, first, *God dwelling among men*. What a wonderful thing! Over the top of the lid of that sacred coffer which was called the ark, there shone an amazing light which was the index of the presence of God.

He was in the midst of the camp of Israel. He that fills heaven and earth, the infinite JEHOVAH, deigned to make that place His special dwelling place, so that He is addressed as, “Thou that dwellest between the cherubims.” Here is a part of the new covenant, “I will dwell in them and walk in them.” It is marvelous that God does speak with men. He whom you heard thunders, last night, as He drove His chariot through the sky—that God in infinite condescension speaks with us—He has come down to us and taken us into relationship with Himself in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is at once the fellow of the Almighty, and the brother of the sons of men.

O beloved, rejoice in the covenant, that God is no longer divided from men! The chasm made by sin is filled, the gulf is bridged, and God now dwells with men and manifests Himself to them. And “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him.”

Next, in that ark you would have noticed, if you could have seen into it, *God reconciled and communing with men upon the mercy seat*. Over the top of that ark, as I have told you, was a golden lid, which fitted it and covered it exactly, and that golden lid was called the mercy seat, the throne of grace. There God spoke with men.

He sat there, as it were, enthroned as the Friend of men. Now, it is a part of the covenant that God hears prayer, that God answers our petitions, that He meets us in a way of reconciled love, that He speaks to us in tones which the spirit can hear though the ear cannot. Thank God for a blood-sprinkled mercy seat. What would we do if we had not that as our meeting place with the thrice-holy JEHOVAH?

Then, within the ark, underneath the lid, if we could have looked in, we would have seen the law, *the two tablets of stone*, which represent *law fulfilled in Christ*, and henceforth laid up in His heart, and laid up in our hearts, too, if we delight in the law of God after the inward man. Now, this is our joy, that the law of God has nothing against the believer. It is fulfilled in Christ and we see it laid up in Christ, not to be a stone to fall upon us to grind us to powder, but beautiful and fair to look upon as it is in the heart of Christ, and fulfilled in the life of Christ. I rejoice in the covenant which contains in it stipulations all fulfilled and commands all executed by our great Representative.

Together with those tablets of the law there was laid up a *rod*, a rod which had originally been a dry stick in the hands of Aaron, but when it was laid up before the Lord it budded, and blossomed, and brought forth almonds. So, in the covenant of grace, we see *the kingdom established and flourishing in Christ*, and we rejoice in it.

Oh how pleased we are to bow before His fruitful sceptre! What wonderful fruit we gather from that blessed rod! Reign, reign, Jesus, reign! The more You do rule us, the more You are absolute Sovereign of our hearts, the happier shall we be, and the more shall we delight ourselves in You. There is no liberty like complete subjection beneath the sway of Jesus who is our Prophet, Priest, and King.

Then, by the side of that rod there was laid up the *golden pot full of manna*, *the provision made for the wilderness*. Let us rejoice that there is in the covenant all the provision that we need. God has laid up for us in Christ all our spiritual meat, all the food that we shall ever need between here and heaven. “Feed me till I want no more,” we cry to our blessed covenant Representative—and He will do so.

Then, over the top of the ark, sat *the cherubim with outstretched wings*, as, I think, *representing how the angels are in league with us, and with the angels all the forces and powers of the universe*. This day, the beasts of the field are our friends and the stones of the field have ceased to be our foes. Child of God, you may travel by land or sea, you may go where you will, for everywhere you are in your Father’s house. All that you see about you is a friend to you, since you are a friend to God.

I often wonder that the earth bears up ungodly men. It must groan beneath the weight of a swearer. It must wish to open and swallow him up. But with the gracious man, the man who fears God, all things are at peace, and we may know it to be so. “Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”

We do not often enough realize, I think, the friendship of all God’s creatures to those who are His children. St. Francis, though he was a Romish monk, yet had a true idea when he used to regard the sparrows and other birds of the air, and even the dogs in the street, as his friends and his brothers, and talked to them as such.

And Luther was much of the same mind when he opened his window, and listened to the chirpings of the robins in the early spring, and felt that they had come to teach the theological doctor some lesson which he had not learned. Oh yes, oh yes, we are quite at home anywhere, now that God is our God! True, the earth travails, and is in pain, and the creation suffers and will suffer till Christ comes again, but still her travail is our travail, and we are in sympathy with her, and when she does reflect the glory of her God she is our looking-glass in which we see our Father’s face.

Thus, I think, I have shown you that there is much to be seen in the ark of the covenant. God give us grace, like the angels, to fix our eyes upon it! “Which things the angels desire to look into.” We have more to do with the ark of His covenant than they have—let us be more desirous even than they are to look therein.

IV. I close with this fourth point. THE COVENANT HAS SOLEMN SURROUNDINGS. Listen—“There were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”

When the people entered into covenant with God on Sinai, the Lord came down upon the top of the mount, and there were thunderings, and lightnings, and voices, and an earthquake. There were all these tokens of His presence and *God will not leave the covenant of His grace without the sanctions of His power*—that thunder, that lightnings, that storm—all these are engaged to keep His covenant.

When they are wanted, the God who smote Egypt with great hailstones, the God who made the Kishon to sweep His enemies away, the God who made the stars in heaven to fight against Sisera will bring all the overwhelming forces that are at His command to the help of His people and the fulfilling of the covenant which He has made with them.

O you who are His people, fall back in confidence upon the God who has treasures of snow, and hail, and the dread artillery of storm and tempest! Most of you, my hearers, have never seen a great storm yet, nor heard in its majesty the thunder of God’s power. You must be in the tropics to know what these can be—and even then you would have to say—“These are but parts of his ways.”

Oh, how the Lord can shake the earth and make it tremble even to its deep foundations when He pleases! He can make what we call “the solid earth” to be as weak as water when He does but lift up His finger. But all the power that God has—and it is boundless—is all in that right hand which has been lifted high to heaven in the solemn oath that He will save His people. Wherefore, lean upon God without the shadow of a doubt. He may well put all your fears to rest even by the thunder of His power.

Then reflect that there is another side to this truth. You who are not in covenant with God, you who have not believed that Jesus is the Christ, you who have never fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before you, you who refuse the divine mercy which comes to you through the bleeding person of the suffering Christ—do remember that there will be for you the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the voices, and the earthquake, and the great hail, for these set forth the *terrors of eternal law overthrowing God’s adversaries*.

You have no conception of what God will do with the ungodly. False teachers may smooth it down as much as they like, but this Book is full of thunderbolts to you who refuse God’s mercy. Listen to this one text, “Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.” Can you sport with that?

Listen to another, “Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies!” What will you say to that, or to this? “And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.” “The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”

They talk as if we invented these terrible words, but we do not—we merely quote the Scriptures of truth and they are terrible indeed to the wicked. They should make men start in their sleep and never rest until they find a Savior.

A Universalist once said to a Christian man that, whatever he did, God would not punish him, and the other replied, “If I spit on your god, I suppose he will not punish me. If I curse him, if I defy him, it will all come right at last?” “Yes,” said the Universalist. “Well,” answered the other, “that may be the character of your God, but don’t you try that kind of thing with my God, the God of the Scriptures, or else you will find that because He is love, He cannot and He will not suffer this world to be in anarchy, but He will rule it, and govern it, and He will punish those that refuse His infinite compassion.”

So I beseech you, my hearers, fly to Jesus at once. Weary, and heavy-laden, look to Him, for He says especially to you, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest.” The Lord add His blessing to the truth I have tried to preach to you, the sweet and the terrible alike, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

HEBREWS 9

Hebrews Chapter 9. Verse 1. *Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.*

That is to say, a material sanctuary, a sanctuary made out of such things as this world contains. Under the old covenant, there were certain outward symbols. Under the new covenant, we have not the symbols, but we have the substance itself. The old law dealt with types and shadows, but the Gospel deals with the spiritual realities themselves.

2-3. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;

All this was by divine appointment—the form of the rooms, the style of the furniture, everything was ordained of God, and that not merely for ornament, but for purposes of instruction. As we shall see farther on, the Holy Ghost intended a significance, a teaching, a meaning, about everything in the old tabernacle, whether it was a candlestick, or a table, or the shewbread.

4-5. Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

It would not have been to the point which the apostle had in hand, so he waived the explanation of those things for another time.

6-8. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Ghost this signifying,

It is from this sentence that I am sure that the Holy Ghost had a signification, a meaning, a teaching, for every item of the ancient tabernacle and temple, and we are not spinning fancies out of idle brains when we interpret these types, and learn from them important Gospel lessons. “The Holy Ghost this signifying,”—

8. That the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

It was necessary that you should take away the sacred tent, the tabernacle, ay, and take away the temple, too, before you could learn the spiritual meaning of them. You must break the shell to get at the kernel. So God had ordained. Hence, there is now no tabernacle, no temple, no holy court, no inner shrine, the holy of holies. The material worship is done away with, in order that we may render the spiritual worship of which the material was but the type.

9. Which was a figure for the time then present,

Only a figure, and only meant for “the time then present.” It was the childhood of the Lord’s people. It was a time when, as yet, the light had not fully broken in upon spiritual eyes, so they must be taught by picture-books. They must have a kind of Kindergarten for the little children, that they might learn the elements of the faith by the symbols, types, and representations of a material worship. When we come into the true Gospel light, all that is done away with. It was only “a figure for the time then present.”

9. In which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

All these rites could only give a fleshly purity, but they could not touch the conscience. If men saw what was meant by the outward type, then the conscience was appeased, but by the outward sign itself the conscience was never comforted, if it was a living and lowly conscience.

10. Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

These ordinances were only laid upon the Jews—not upon any other people—and only laid upon them until the better and brighter days of reformation and fuller illumination.

11. But Christ—

Oh, how we seem to rise when we begin to get near to Him, away from the high priests of the Jews! “But Christ”—

12. *Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

The Jewish high priests went once a year into the Holy of Holies. Each year, as it came round, demanded that they should go again. Their work was never done, but “He entered in once,” and only once, “into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

I love that expression, “eternal redemption”—a redemption which really does redeem, and redeems forever and ever. If you are redeemed by it, you cannot be lost; if this redemption be yours, it is not for a time, or for a season, but it is “eternal redemption.” Oh, how you ought to rejoice in the one entrance within the veil by our great High Priest who has obtained eternal redemption for us!

13-15. *For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*

When you come to deal with Christ, you have to do with eternal things. There is nothing temporary about Him or about His work. It is “eternal redemption” that He has obtained for us, it is an “eternal inheritance” that He has purchased for us.

16-17. *For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.*

Or “Where a covenant is, there must also be the death of him who covenants or of that by which the covenant is established.” Or read it as we have it in our version, for it seems as if it must be so, although we are loathe to give the meaning of “testament” to the word, since its natural meaning is evidently covenant, “Where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth”; or, if you will, while the victim that was to confirm the covenant lived, the covenant was not ratified. It must be slain before it could be thus effective.

18-22. *Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.*

There is no truth more plain than this in the whole of the Old Testament and it must have within it a very weighty lesson to our souls. There are some who cannot endure the doctrine of a substitutionary atonement. Let them beware lest they be casting away the very soul and essence of the Gospel. It is evident that the sacrifice of Christ was intended to give ease to the conscience, for we read that the blood of bulls and of goats could not do that.

I fail to see how any doctrine of atonement except the doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ can give ease to the guilty conscience. Christ in my stead suffering the penalty of my sin—that pacifies my conscience, but nothing else does, “Without shedding of blood is no remission.”

23. *It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these;*

These things down below are only the patterns, the models, the symbols of the heavenly things. They could therefore be ceremonially purified with the blood which is the symbol of the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

23-24. *But the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:*

He never went within the veil in the Jewish temple—that was but the symbol of the true holy of holies. He has gone “into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”

25-28. *Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;*

There is no need that He should die again, His one offering has forever perfected all His people. There remains nothing but His final coming for the judgment of the ungodly, and the acquittal of His redeemed.

28. *And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

Christ’s second coming will be “without sin,” and without a sin offering, too, wholly apart from sin, unto the salvation of all His chosen. May we all be amongst those who are looking for Him! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—327, 228, 193

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.